

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims shall replace all previous listing of claims for the above-captioned patent application:

1. (Currently Amended) An auxiliary sample handler for retaining a plurality of auxiliary patient sample containers, said auxiliary sample handler comprising:
 - a housing that includes a plurality of tip retaining stations;
 - a housing cover sized to cover each of said tip retaining stations;
 - a drive mechanism used to rotate said tip retaining stations about an axis of rotation;
 - a plurality of metering tips disposed in said plurality of tip retaining stations, each of said metering tips ~~being configured to retain~~ retaining a quantity of sample liquid from a primary sample handler of a clinical analyzer and therein acting ~~act~~ as an auxiliary sample container, each of said metering tips including a dispense end;
 - a sealing mechanism disposed on said housing for sealing the dispense end of each of said metering tips containing sample liquid;
 - a tip stripping mechanism disposed in said housing cover for sequentially removing each said ~~sealed~~ metering tip following sealing of said dispense end by said sealing mechanism from a metering mechanism of a clinical analyzer; and
 - an aspiration station including an opening in said housing cover to permit selective access to at least one sealed metering tip in order to permit aspiration therefrom, said drive mechanism being configured to rotate said tip retaining stations into position with said aspiration station.
2. (Canceled).
3. (Canceled).
4. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, wherein said sealing mechanism includes at least one heated element.
5. (Canceled).

6. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including an optical instrument disposed in said housing for measuring at least one optical property of sample liquid contained in each of said plurality of metering tips, said drive mechanism being configured to selectively move each of said tip retaining stations in relation to said optical instrument.

7. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 6, wherein said optical instrument is a spectrophotometer.

8. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of tip retaining stations are disposed on a ring.

9. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 8, including a second ring having a plurality of tip retaining stations disposed thereupon.

10. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 9, wherein said first ring and said second ring are concentric.

11. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 10, wherein each of said first and second rings is independently driven about a common axis of rotation.

12. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 11, wherein each of said rings is bi-directionally rotatable about said common axis of rotation.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Canceled).

15. (Canceled).
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74. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including a detection mechanism to detect when any tip retaining position of said auxiliary sample handler is empty.

75. (Previously Presented) The auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including a removal mechanism to remove sealed metering tips from said tip retaining station when testing is completed.

- 76. (Canceled).
- 77. (Canceled).
- 78. (Canceled).
- 79. (Canceled).
- 80. (Canceled).
- 81. (Canceled).
- 82. (Canceled).